

# THE LEAFLET

December 2014

The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden Vol. 4, No 12





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The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, México



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## Curator's Corner

*Dear Friends of the Garden,*

Through the generous support of an entire community and the follow-through of Garden staff and volunteers we will soon celebrate the Grand Opening of the Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids and Native Plants. Many who have only seen this facility during or upon construction will soon have a chance to visit again with the exciting accompaniment of a full palate of native Mexican plants, especially featuring exquisite orchids from throughout the country. Our Grand Opening Week (December 6-13th) is filled with activities to entertain, engage, and educate visitors of the marvels of Western Mexico's bio-diverse tropical forests.

Here at the Garden, we wish a merry holiday season from our family to yours. Despite the negative news and images all too prevalent in popular media, we always have the solace of nature to revive our spirits and allow us to focus on images of tranquility and beauty which thankfully also still abound in our world.

To those of you in Puerto Vallarta, please come up to the mountains and visit us soon; to those of you in other places, keep Mexico in your hearts!

*From the Garden,*

*Bob Price, Curator and Founder*





# Noche Buena

## A Native Mexican Botanical Herald of the Christmas Season

*By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG*

In the early 1800's, Joel Roberts Poinsett introduced the lovely native Mexican *Euphorbia pulcherrima* to the US from where it became known to much the world as Poinsettia. Well before then, this handsome ornamental had been cultivated in Mexico in time for the holidays for its Christmas-appropriate festive colors. The longer nights approaching the Christmas season trigger a change in color of this plant's bracts to the deep red most traditionally associated with this flower. A walk in the forest near the Vallarta Botanical Garden will readily bring you upon dozens of wild specimens in their full glory. The Spanish name for this plant, *Noche Buena* (literally "Good Night"), is also how we refer to Christmas Eve here in Mexico.

The Poinsettia, as it is now commonly known outside its country of origin, is a horticulturally important ornamental found in an array of colors from the traditional deep red to pink, white, yellow, orange, or a marbled mix of these. Whether you come across *Noche Buena* this winter while walking in the woods of the Vallarta Region or gracing your table as a holiday centerpiece, please remember Mexico as the source of yet another botanical delight.



Bob Price, the Garden's Founder and Curator, captures a shot of blooming *Noche Buenas* in the forest just outside the VBG.  
Photo by Jesus Reyes on November 16th, 2014.





## Mexican Bird of the Month — The Blue-footed booby

Especially associated with the Galapagos Islands where they are particularly abundant, the Blue-footed booby (*Sula nebouxii*) can also be found in great numbers in the Vallarta Region—if you know where to search. Amazingly, a sizable population resides only 5 miles away from the Garden on the most seaward island of the *Los Arcos* group by Mismaloya. Our bird watching recommendation is to kayak out from Mismaloya in the early morning while the boobies are still roosting and when wave and wind conditions are usually at their calmest.

Many thanks to Greg Homel of [Natural Encounters Birding Tours](#) for his images of the Blue-footed booby and Los Arcos. Greg is the Audubon Society's official Count Compiler of the Bahia Banderas – Puerto Vallarta Christmas Bird Count of which the Vallarta Botanical Garden is a very active participant. Please read on in our Upcoming Events section on how you can participate with us on our next count scheduled for December 15, 2014.

**The Los Arcos Island Group (only 5 miles from the Vallarta Botanical Garden) is home to an iconic Pacific Island species: The Blue-footed booby**







## Mexican Orchid of the Month – The “Jingle Bell” Orchid



This month's orchid, while observed by very few, is actually surprisingly common in our native forests and landscaped areas. The “Jingle Bell Orchid” (*Dendrophylax porrectus*) is found growing as a “twig epiphyte” and especially prevalent on guava trees and hibiscus bushes within the VBG. While its flowers are barely visible to the naked eye, its charming little dangling seed capsules look like something fit for a miniature one horse open sleigh. Its essentially leafless appearance and nearly microscopic size—the roots in the above picture are roughly the size of sewing needles—make it look like something fit for a world of elves and fairies.

If you have trouble spotting this little diminutive delight on your own, be sure to ask where you can find it on display in the Vallarta Botanical Garden's new Conservatory—we'd be happy to point it out to you!





## **Grand Opening Festival: Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids and Native Plants**

**December 6th – 13th**

For an event as anticipated as the Grand Opening of the new Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids and Native Plants, nothing short of a week-long celebration would seem sufficient. Join us on the first day of the Grand Opening Festival for a ribbon-cutting ceremony followed by performances by local mariachi musicians and the El Tuito Folkloric Dance Troop.

Each day of our opening week is scheduled with activities to delight cultural and botanical explorers of all ages.

The opening day of the new conservatory also coincides with the unveiling of a new art exhibition by Mexican-American artist Esperanza Gama. Just as our work in plant propagation and display inspires multitudes of visitors, Esperanza's interpretations of the natural world and its effect on the human psyche is an inspiration to *our* imaginations. We thank both her and her colleagues at the National Museum of Mexican Art for this collaboration.

Dec.	Start	Activity	Details
6	1 pm	Ribbon Cutting Ceremony	Join us at the big moment of our official opening!
	2 pm	Mariachis, Folkloric Dance	Celebrate with performances of dance and music
7	2 pm	Meet the Artist	Topic: The inspiration of Mexican Orchids (Esperanza Gama)
8	2 pm	Botanical Exploration: Orchids	Orchids of Vallarta's Cloud Forests (Bob Price)
9	2 pm	Meet the Artist	Topic: Biodiversity in Art (Esperanza Gama)
10	2 pm	Lecture: The History of Vanilla	T. J. Hartung shares tales of this tasty native Mexican Orchid.
11	2 pm	Bob Bruneau & Joan Houston	Song and piano performances by Vallarta ex-pat musicians.
12	2 pm	Meet the Artist	Topic: Amate paper as a magical canvas (Esperanza Gama)
13	2 pm	Gabriel Delgadillo	Performances in song by popular Tepic Area contratenor

All activities during our Grand Opening Week are included with your admission which remains at just 60 pesos per person until December 14th. Reservations are not necessary... just show up when you can and celebrate with us!

### **Did you know...**

**Mexico is home to over  
1200 species of orchids!**

**1/3 of Mexican Orchids are endemic:**  
naturally occurring nowhere else on the planet!







# FIREWORKS & COCKTAILS

Celebrate the Holidays with us!

**Saturday, Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>**

**2014 International Fireworks Festival!**

**Who:** Anyone who cares to support the Vallarta Botanical Garden (and enjoys cocktails & fireworks!)

**What:** Cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, & incredible views for the **2014 International Fireworks Festival**

**When:** Saturday, December 27th, 7:00 – 11:00 pm

**Where:** The Penthouse Suite of the oceanfront Molino de Agua Building in Old Town Puerto Vallarta

**Why:** Watch the fireworks, meet new friends, and support the Vallarta Botanical Garden

**How:** Purchase your entry ticket of 700 MXN (about at 50 USD) at any one of the following locations:

Vallarta Botanical Garden	Km. 24 of the Highway 200	322-223-6182
Timothy Real Estate Group	The Molino de Agua Building near the Cuale River	322-223-5300
Kristina's Salon	Marina Vallarta, Puesto del Sol Loc 9B	322-221 3256
Carol's Boutique	Basilo Badillo #250 across from Freddie's Tucan	322-113-0073

So you've heard that Puerto Vallarta is hosting the **2014 International Fireworks Festival**... but have you picked your spot to watch the pyrotechnics? Richard Ditton, Garden Member and the new owner of the Penthouse Suite of the Molino de Agua Building, has offered to host a Garden fundraiser from this towering oceanfront perch. Beyond its stunning panoramic views of the entire Banderas Bay, this location is perfectly situated between the Los Muertos Pier and the Malecón—two of the main launch points for the big fireworks spectacular.

While fireworks are booming from the shore, elsewhere in the bay, explosions of flowers are bursting to the delight of residents and visitors alike at the Vallarta Botanical Garden. Beyond beauty, this organization is working to conserve native plants and teach a message of environmental sustainability to its guests from all over the world and those who call Puerto Vallarta home.





# The Jalisco Mountain Pine

## Refuge for the Guacamayas

*In Cabo Corrientes, Jalisco, Mexico*

*By Neil Gerlowski (Executive Director, VBG) and Ana Nuño Rubio (Biologist, UDG CUCBA)*

Nearly two years ago, wildlife enthusiasts from far and wide mourned the tragic destruction of an enormous old Jalisco Mountain Pine in the nearby forest by poachers collecting young Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*), or *guacamayas* as we call them in Mexico. In response, we at the Garden organized and participated in a rescue mission for the surviving adult macaws along with zip-line technicians from Vallarta Adventures and a large team of other volunteers. By providing “resurrected” nest boxes (using pieces of the original trunk) the adults have now raised new families and more macaws are now thriving in this natural sanctuary than before the 2012 poaching incident. To visit the guacamaya sanctuary for yourself, contact [novoapv@hotmail.com](mailto:novoapv@hotmail.com).

The Vallarta Botanical Garden, located on the “Palms to Pines Highway” (Route 200), is poised right at the transition from Tropical Semi-deciduous Forest and Oak-Pine Forest at a perfect spot to grow specimens from both of these diverse ecozones. In addition to the Jalisco Mountain Pine (*Pinus jaliscana*), here at the Garden you can also find the following species: *Pinus oocarpa*, *P. maximinoi*, and *P. douglasiana*. We hope to soon have more representatives of Mexican pine diversity in our collections. Other than the Yucatan Peninsula, pines can be found in every state of the country including many that are endemic to Mexico. Educating the public about these plants helps secure their successful future as well as that of the animals that depend on them for their very existence.

Mexico is the leading country in pine diversity with 46 of the planet’s 110 pine species. Military Macaws are among the many native animals dependent on pines for food and shelter.

During their nesting season, macaws are especially vulnerable to poachers. The macaws need your help: never purchase native wildlife as pets or for any reason!







## Christmas Bird Count December 15th

When the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was founded over 100 years ago, it provided an alternative to those who shot birds as a form of competition among friends. Now more than a century later, the only shooting that takes place in these events is photography and the count information is compiled to provide critical data for scientists and policy makers to conserve habitats for imperiled species.

This “citizen science” is helping save species around the world. In 2013, professional bird guide Greg Homel coordinated regional participation in this effort with the first “Bahia Banderas — Puerto Vallarta” CBC. Participants at the Vallarta Botanical Garden (the southern limit to a 15 mile diameter circle) contributed to the success of 201 registered species over a 24 hour period, instantly placing the area among the top count circles in North America!

Those wishing to participate in this year’s count, whether at the Garden or scores of other areas to choose from within this defined circle, are encouraged to coordinate your efforts with the Audubon Society’s count compiler, Greg Homel: [birdingadventures@mac.com](mailto:birdingadventures@mac.com). With your help, we can collect better data to conserve the magnificent species of the Puerto Vallarta Region.

## Crash Course on Birding in Tropical Western Mexico

Would you like to participate in the 2014 Christmas Bird Count, but feel the need to brush up on local species? Please join us at the Garden the day *before* the count — **Dec. 14** — for a review of Tropical West Mexican birds including some of the species most commonly misidentified within our region. Start time for the “Crash Course” is at 9:30 am and will run until about 11:30 am with plenty of time for questions and answers. Pre-registration is not required, but does help those planning the course: [educadorambiental@vbgardens.org](mailto:educadorambiental@vbgardens.org).



## VBG Education & Volunteer Program Report

*By Linda Asencio, Biologist and Environmental Educator*

*Peace Corps Volunteer at the Vallarta Botanical Garden through a collaboration with Mexico's Park Service (CONANP)*



November was a big month for school visits! We were happy to offer complimentary entries and guided educational tours of the Garden to over 150 local students and teachers. Those served include the Colegio la Marina and the University of Guadalajara's CUCosta campus.

### **Monthly tally of visits, program participation, and volunteer service:**

Nov. 2014	Total member visits to the VBG:	323
	Total non-member visits to the VBG:	2215
	Complimentary entries for organized school groups*:	186
	Total participation in daily 1 pm tours:	246
	Total participation in special events, classes, or workshops:	243
	Total volunteer service hours:	204

\*The VBG is happy to provide complimentary entries, guided tours, and educational programming for organized school groups with advanced reservations as one of our services to the Bahía de Banderas, Puerto Vallarta, and Cabo Corrientes communities. Reservation requests should be sent to [educadorambiental@vbgardens.org](mailto:educadorambiental@vbgardens.org) at least 5 days before the requested date of your visit. Requests are granted first come, first served and are scheduled around other events and programs already on our [calendar](#).



## Vallarta Botanical Garden's Upcoming Events & Special Dates

Date			Cost
<b>2014</b>			
6-13	DEC	<b>Grand Opening Festival - Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids &amp; Native Plants</b>	Included with entry
6	DEC	<b>Ribbon Cutting Ceremony</b> – Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids & Native Plants - 1 pm	Included with entry
6	DEC	<b>Mariachis &amp; El Tuito Folkloric Dancers</b> -2 pm	Included with entry
7	DEC	<b>Meet the Artist</b> , Topic: The Inspiration of Mexican Orchids (Esperanza Gama) -2 pm	Included with entry
8	DEC	<b>Botanical Exploration</b> , Orchids of Vallarta's Cloud Forests (Bob Price) -2 pm	Included with entry
9	DEC	<b>Meet the Artist</b> , Topic: Biodiversity in Art (Esperanza Gama) -2 pm	Included with entry
10	DEC	<b>The History of Vanilla</b> , Tales of a tasty native Mexican Orchid (T.J. Hartung) -2 pm	Included with entry
11	DEC	<b>Bob Bruneau &amp; Joan Houston</b> , Song & piano performances -2 pm	Included with entry
12	DEC	<b>Meet the Artist</b> , Topic: Amate paper as a magical canvas (Esperanza Gama) -2 pm	Included with entry
13	DEC	<b>Gabriel Delgadillo</b> , Performances in song by popular Tepic Area countertenor -2 pm	Included with entry
14	DEC	<b>Crash Course on Birding in Tropical Western Mexico</b> , 9:30-11:30 am	Included with entry
15	DEC	<b>Christmas Bird Count</b> , Citizen science in conjunction with the Audubon Society All are welcome during regular garden hours (10 am- 6 pm) Inquiries about participating before or after regular hours should be sent to <a href="mailto:info@vbgardens.org">info@vbgardens.org</a> .	Included with entry
25	DEC	<b>Gardens Closed– Merry Christmas!</b>	---
<b>2015</b>			
1	JAN	<b>Gardens Closed – Happy New Year!</b>	---
3	JAN	<b>Volunteer Training</b> – 10:30am -2:00 pm (Optional activities start at 9 am) Registration by December 29th required: <a href="mailto:educadorambiental@vbgardens.org">educadorambiental@vbgardens.org</a>	Free, <a href="#">but requires registration</a>

\* Some activities subject to change. The most current calendar, often with links to further event information can be viewed at [www.vbgardens.org/calendar](http://www.vbgardens.org/calendar).

### Garden Hours 10 am – 6 pm

**Open 7 days/wk** for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March (except Christmas & New Year's Day)

**Open 6 days/wk** (**Closed Mondays**) April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., & Nov

**Early "Bird" Opening:** 8 am every Thursday

**Daily Guided Tour:** 1 pm (Offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March)

**Additional tours** can be reserved in advance [www.vbgardens.org/tours](http://www.vbgardens.org/tours)





## From the Membership Desk

It's the holidays! During this time of giving, we welcome more new or returning members at the Garden than any other time of the year. Your membership not only provides great benefits including unlimited entry and discounts, but provides the means by which we create positive change for the Vallarta Region!

To upgrade a current membership, renew, join us for the very first time, or just say hi, please visit with me at the Garden soon, visit our member page online at [www.vbgardens.org/memberships](http://www.vbgardens.org/memberships), or email me at [memberships@vbgardens.org](mailto:memberships@vbgardens.org).

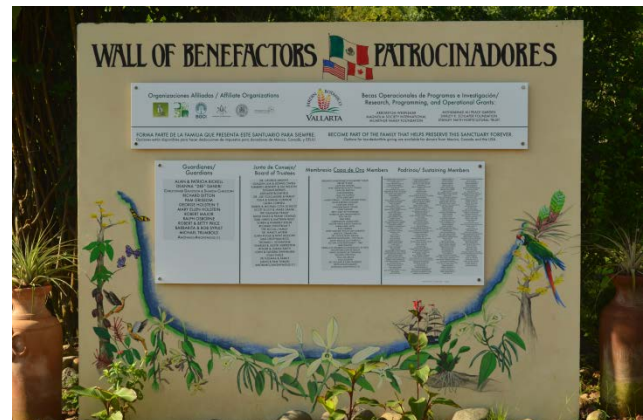
¡Muchas gracias! **Michaela Flores, Membership Coordinator, VBG**

## Can you find your name on our WALL OF BENEFACTORS?

**If you're not yet "on the wall" we invite you to join the family that preserves the Garden forever!**

Becoming a member is easy & provides great benefits:  
[www.vbgardens.org/memberships](http://www.vbgardens.org/memberships)

A high resolution image of this photograph is available at [www.vbgardens.org/benefactors](http://www.vbgardens.org/benefactors)





**We would like to acknowledge and thank the following supporters:**

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† = deceased (S) = student (I) = individual

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- Located just 30 minutes from Old Town Puerto Vallarta at  
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 - Credit card payments may be made by phone: 322 223 6182 (10am – 6pm, closed Mon. in summer)  
- Direct Deposits: Banorte account # 0201383728 (account name: Vallarta Botanical Gardens A.C.)  
- **For questions about tax-deductible giving in Mexico please contact us:** [info@vbgardens.org](mailto:info@vbgardens.org).

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**Canada** - Our educational programs qualify for **tax-deduction receipts** provided by The Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation (CCSHF)



Cheques may be mailed to:

Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation  
87 Lavinia Ave  
Toronto, ON,  
M6S 3H9  
Canada

Please write "VBG" for "Vallarta Botanical Gardens" on your cheques.

Alternatively, you may donate using a credit card through CanadaHelps.org (whose donation page is linked to the CCSHF website [www.ccs hf.ca](http://www.ccs hf.ca)) selecting the "Vallarta Botanical Gardens Fund."

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Checks may be mailed to:

Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C.  
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Davis, CA 95616

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### Vallarta Botanical Garden's Contact Information:

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**Email:** [info@vbgardens.org](mailto:info@vbgardens.org)

**Web:** [www.vbgardens.org](http://www.vbgardens.org)

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